

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SP-02 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 L-02 /040 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6442

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, EMIN, GB, SA

SUBJ: POSSIBLE SAUDI ARABIAN INTEREST IN GABONESE IRON ORE

REF: STATE 113871

1. MINISTER MBOUY-BOUTZIT TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT HAD INDICATED TO GOG THAT IT CONSIDERED MARCONA TO BE TOO SMALL A FIRM TO MEET ITS NEEDS AND WISHED TO DEAL WITH ONLY ONE OF THE U.S. GIANTS SUCH AS U.S. STEEL OR BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD SUGGESTED BEHTLEHEM BECAUSE OF ITS CONNECTION WITH THE BELINGA IRON ORE. STILL ACCORDING TO MBOUY-BOUTZIT, SAUDIS HAD FURTHER STATED THAT THEY WOULD ABANDON THEIR PLANS TO USE BRAZILIAN IRON ORE AND USE GABONESE IRON ORE INSTEAD IF BETHLEHEM WOULD AGREE TO BUILD THEIR STEEL MILL.

2. COMMENT: EMBASSY CANNOT COMMENT ON ACCURACY OF ANY OF ABOVE INASMUCH AS OUR ONLY SOURCE OF INFORMATION IS WHAT AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN TOLD BY GABONESE MINISTER OF MINES MBOUY-BOUTZIT. ASSUMING THAT WHAT MBOUY-BOUTZIT SAYS IS TRUE AND THAT (A) SAUDIS OBJECTION TO MARCONA IS THAT FIRM IS TOO SMALL AND (B) BETHLEHEM'S PROBLEM IS THAT THEY WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SPARE NEEDED EXPERTISE, IT OCCURS TO US THAT BETHLEHEM AND MARCONA

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MIGHT PERHAPS WORK AS JOINT VENTURE TOGETHER. IN THIS

WAY SAUDIS WOULD BE SATISFIED BY HAVING BETHLEHEM
INVOLVED AND BETHLEHEM WOULD NOT NEED TO SPARE AS
MANY EXPERTS SINCE IT COULD USE MARCONA PERSONNEL.
THIS MAY, OF COURSE, NOT BE AT ALL ACCEPTABLE TO
AMERICAN FIRMS INVOLVED. WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN U.S. STEEL COMPANIES OUTSIDE THE
U.S. WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO U.S. ANTI-TRUST LAWS.
MCKESSON

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